

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 025780

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TAGS: MPOL, NATO, UK

SUBJECT: UK DEFENSE REVIEW

REFS: USNATO 7097; USNATO 0583; USNATO 0520

1. BEGIN FYI. AS MISSION AWARE, USG GAVE ITS VIEWS ON UK DEFENSE REVIEW PRIVATELY TO HMG LAST NOVEMBER (UK ALSO CONSULTED WITH FRG). FACT OF THESE PRE-CONSULTATIONS SHOULD NOT BE COMMUNICATED TO OTHER ALLIES. WE HAVE SINCE RECEIVED HMG RESPONSE TO OUR COMMENTS OF LAST NOVEMBER AND NOTE THAT IN SOME CASES UK HAS MODIFIED ITS ORIGINAL STAND. WHERE APPROPRIATE, WE GIVE THE BRITISH RESPONSE TO OUR NOVEMBER COMMENTS FOR YOUR INFORMATION ONLY. END FYI.

2. MISSION MAY DRAW ON FOLLOWING (ALREADY COMMUNICATED TO UK) DURING DPC MEETING ON DEFENSE REVIEW.

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 STATE 025780

A. THE US ENDORSES THE EMPHASIS GIVEN BY THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT TO THE DEFENSE OF NATO'S CENTER REGION, THE EASTERN ATLANTIC, AND THE HOME ISLANDS. WE ARE CONCERNED, HOWEVER, WITH SEVERAL ASPECTS OF THE DEFENSE REVIEW. IN BROADEST TERMS, THESE CONCERNS RELATE TO THE SCOPE OF THE REDUCTIONS AND OUR BELIEF THAT THE PROPOSED UK REDUCTIONS WILL DEGRADE ALLIANCE CAPABILITIES TO REINFORCE, ESPECIALLY ON ITS SOUTHERN FLANK, AND WILL CONTRIBUTE TO PUBLIC AND PARLIAMENTARY PRESSURES ELSEWHERE IN NATO TO

REDUCE DEFENSE FORCES AND SPENDING.

B. REINFORCEMENT CAPABILITY. OUR INTERPRETATION OF THE BRITISH PLANS INDICATES THAT AT LEAST NINE BATTALIONS OF REGULAR ARMY INFANTRY WILL BE ELIMINATED AS A RESULT OF THE PROPOSED REDUCTIONS IN THE STRATEGIC RESERVE. THE U.S. IS CONCERNED THAT SUCH LARGE CUTS IN THE UK STRATEGIC RESERVE WILL MEAN THAT THE BRITISH WILL NOT RETAIN A CAPABILITY TO REINFORCE THE BAOR WITH ADDITIONAL MAJOR COMBAT FORMATIONS. THE U.S. IS ALSO WORRIED THAT CUTS IN THESE FORCES WILL REDUCE THE ROTATION BASE FOR BRITISH FORCES ELSEWHERE AND POSSIBLY LEAD TO FURTHER DRAWDOWNS IN BAOR COMBAT UNITS. ACCORDINGLY, THE U.S. BELIEVES THAT THE UK MIGHT, AS AN ALTERNATIVE TO THEIR PLAN TO CUT THE STRATEGIC RESERVE COMBAT UNITS, EXPLORE WAYS TO APPLY THESE REDUCTIONS TO THE UK-BASED NATIONAL OVERHEAD. (FYI. UK RESPONSE TO OUR COMMENTS SAYS UK REDUCTIONS IN UK'S SPECIALIST REINFORCEMENT CAPABILITY IS MAINLY IN MOVEMENT RESOURCES AND SPECIALIZED EQUIPMENT. THE REINFORCEMENT BRIGADE GROUP WILL BE LARGER AND HEAVIER THAN ANY OF EXISTING BRIGADE GROUPS IN UK ASSIGNED TO NATO. IN TIME OF TENSION, UK WILL BE ABLE TO INCREASE FLOW OF REINFORCEMENTS TO BAOR BY ABOUT 2,500 REGULARS AND 2,500 RESERVISTS. THIS WOULD BE DONE UNDER QUEEN'S ORDER (ADMINISTRATIVELY, WITHOUT SPECIFIC PARLIAMENTARY SANCTION). UK STUDYING MEANS TO REDUCE TIME REQUIRED TO DEPLOY THESE REINFORCEMENTS. UK MAINTAINS ARMY CHANGES WILL NOT DIMINISH ROTATION BASE FOR BRITISH FORCES ELSEWHERE OR NECESSITATE MORE FREQUENT TEMPORARY REDUCTIONS IN BAOR. END FYI.)

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 03 STATE 025780

C. UK COMMITMENTS IN THE MEDITERRANEAN. THE BRITISH BASES AT CYPRUS AND MALTA PROVIDE VISIBLE EVIDENCE OF CONTINUED WESTERN INTEREST IN THE MEDITERRANEAN. A LOWERING OF NATO NAVAL ASSETS, ESPECIALLY IN THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN, MAY BE SEEN BY THE SOVIETS AS AN IMPORTANT SHIFT IN THE CORRELATION OF FORCES THERE. WE BELIEVE UK COULD LESSEN IMPACT OF NAVAL WITHDRAWALS IF IT COULD

AGREE TO ANNOUNCE PUBLICLY THAT IT WOULD CONTINUE TO MAKE SHIP VISITS TO THE AREA AND WOULD JOIN IN NAVAL EXERCISES AND MAKE PERIODIC DEPLOYMENTS OF NAVAL TASK FORCES TO THE AREA. (FYI. UK RESPONSE STATES UK WITHDRAWAL OF SHIPS AND AIRCRAFT FROM MEDITERRANEAN SHOULD BE SEEN IN LIGHT OF UK'S PRIORITIES, WHICH USG HAS AGREED. UK WILL REMAIN IN MALTA UNTIL EXPIRATION OF AGREEMENT IN 1979; WILL REMAIN IN GIBRALTER. UK HAS ALSO TOLD US IT WILL QTE REMAIN IN CYPRUS UNQTE BUT IS STUDYING POSSIBLE NATURE, SIZE AND COST OF ITS PRESENCE ON CYPRUS. RN SHIPS WILL CONTINUE TO VISIT MEDITERRANEAN AND UK WILL MAINTAIN ITS

CONTRIBUTION TO AMF WHEN IT DEPLOYS TO SOUTHERN FLANK. UK, IN RESPONDING TO OUR COMMENTS ON ITS WITHDRAWAL EAST OF SUEZ, NOTES THAT IT WILL STILL HAVE SHIPS, TROOPS, AND AIRCRAFT CAPABLE OF GOING TO OTHER PARTS OF THE WORLD. IN EXTREME CIRCUMSTANCES, UK MIGHT HAVE TO SEND THEM EVEN THOUGH COMMITTED TO NATO. END FYI.)

D. WE UNDERSTAND WHY THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT MUST DEAL WITH INFLATION, RECESSION AND A DETERIORATION IN THE BALANCE OF PAYMENTS ACCOUNT. HOWEVER, WE HOPE THAT THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT WILL AGREE THAT MEASURES TAKEN IN THIS REGARD SHOULD, TO THE MAXIMUM EXTENT POSSIBLE, NOT JEOPARDIZE LONGER TERM MILITARY AND POLITICAL GOALS. WE THUS HOPE THAT SOME OF THE MORE CRITICAL DECISIONS WILL NOT BE IMPLEMENTED IN SUCH A WAY THAT THEY BECOME IRREVOCABLE; AND WE TRUST THAT THESE CHANGES WILL BE TEMPORARY IN NATURE, AWAITING THE RECOVERY OF THE BRITISH ECONOMY.

E. THE US HOPES THAT, IN FURTHER REVIEWING ITS SPENDING PRIORITIES, THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT WILL ENSURE THAT
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 04 STATE 025780

DEFENSE DOES NOT SUFFER DISPROPORTIONATE CUTS SIMPLY BECAUSE IT IS MORE IMMEDIATELY CONTROLLABLE THAN CERTAIN OTHER COSTS. ALL THE ALLIES FACE SIMILAR HARD CHOICES. THE US IS DETERMINED THAT ITS DEFENSE BUDGET WILL MAINTAIN OUR SPENDING LEVELS IN REAL TERMS. SUCCESS OF OUR ALLIES IN THIS REGARD COULD HAVE A FAVORABLE EFFECT ON CONGRESSIONAL ATTITUDES TOWARD OUR OWN BUDGETARY REQUEST.

F. WE ARE PARTICULARLY CONCERNED THAT ANY CUTS IN THE UK CONTRIBUTION TO NATO WOULD INCREASE PRESSURE IN CONGRESS FOR CUTS IN US EUROPE-BASED FORCES AND ERODE CONGRESSIONAL SUPPORT FOR US ACTIONS TO ENHANCE COMBAT CAPABILITY IN EUROPE. OUR ACTIONS TO INCREASE CAPABILITY TAKEN UNDER THE NUNN AMENDMENT WILL RUN INTO MORE OPPOSITION IF IT APPEARS WE ARE COMPENSATING FOR UK CUTS.

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